



Maryland Department of
Juvenile Services
Successful Youth • Strong Leaders • Safer Communities

Report on the Department of Juvenile Services Central Review Committee

Implementation of Chapter 198, 2012 Laws of Maryland

MSAR #9224

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INTRODUCTION

During the 2012 regular session, the Maryland General Assembly passed Senate Bill 245 (Chapter 198), which strengthened the ability to manage the treatment needs of youth committed to the care and custody of the Department of Juvenile Services. Specifically, SB 245 authorized DJS, on approval of the Director of Behavioral Health, to transfer a child committed for residential placement from one facility to another if the change is necessary to appropriately administer the commitment of the child.

The bill required DJS to report to the General Assembly, on or before January 1, 2014, on the implementation of this legislation. The bill took effect June 1, 2012, remained effective for two years and one month, and terminates at the end of June 30, 2014. This report will provide an overview and analysis of the Maryland Law pertaining to juvenile commitments to residential programs, implementation of SB 245, and a review of the outcomes.

Overview of Maryland Law Governing DJS Commitments to Residential Programs

Currently, when a youth is adjudicated delinquent the court may commit a child to the custody and guardianship of DJS when making a disposition on a delinquency petition. Md. Code, Courts and Judicial Proceedings, §3-8A-19. The court may commit the child on the terms that the court considers appropriate to address factors, such as the child's treatment and rehabilitation needs. §3-8A-19. This may include designating the type of facility where a child is to be accommodated until the court approves termination of the commitment to DJS. §3-8A-19.

Prior to the passage of SB 245, when a youth in placement was struggling or having significant behavior problems to the point that the facility could no longer manage the youth, the youth was ejected from the program and returned to a secure detention facility to await a court review and placement in another facility("pending placement"). The return to a secure detention facility from the youth's committed placement created an unnecessary disruption in a youth's treatment services.

To address the disruption in the youth's treatment services and manage their needs, in 2012 DJS requested that the General Assembly pass SB 245. SB 245 sought to improve the system to ensure that youth are receiving necessary treatment and rehabilitation services while committed to DJS with minimal disruptions. This necessary change resulted in allowing DJS to more efficiently manage the youth committed to DJS's care and custody by reducing the pending placement population and promoting a system of care. The General Assembly passed SB 245 which has assisted DJS in leveraging current resources to best serve youth committed to DJS for treatment and rehabilitation by:

- Eliminating a youth's time in detention when a youth is ejected from a residential placement. Youth do not receive treatment services while awaiting placement in detention.
- Reducing the likelihood a youth will be released from pending placement status without the benefit of treatment when they remain in detention pending placement for long periods of time.
- Decreasing the overall length of time youth are committed to DJS, by allowing DJS to swiftly address treatment concerns and issues without the youth being placed in detention.

With the passage of SB 245 DJS is permitted, when necessary to appropriately administer the commitment of a child, to transfer a child committed for residential placement from one facility or program directly to another facility or program without requiring an admission in to a secure detention facility. The facility must be one that is consistent with the type of facility ordered by the court or more secure, and the transfer must be approved by the DJS Director of Behavioral Health. MD. Code, Courts and Judicial Proceedings, §3-8A-19. When utilizing these provisions, DJS is required to notify the court, the state's attorney, the child's counsel, and the parent or

guardian prior to changing a youth's residential placement. §3-8A-19. Moreover, the Court may conduct hearing at any time for the purpose of reviewing the commitment order and the transfer of a child to a new residential placement. §3-8A-19.

Implementation of SB 245

To manage the implementation SB 245, DJS created the Central Review Committee (CRC). The CRC is an interdisciplinary team to help guide service delivery for youth. The CRC is chaired by the Director of Behavioral Health and is responsible for conducting case reviews, directing the provision of treatment services, and making placement transfer decisions of committed youth as authorized by Cts. and Jud. Proc., § 3-8A-15.

The CRC is comprised of the following members:

- Director of Behavioral Health, Chair;
- Executive Director for Community Services;
- Executive Director for Residential Services;
- Director of the Resource Office; and
- A representative from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

The CRC, on approval of the Chair, has the authority to make decisions to transfer youth from one placement to another, provided:

- The placement is consistent with the type of facility designated by the court; or
- The placement is more secure than the type of placement designated by the court. §3-8A-19.

The CRC also conducts case reviews and reviews the provision of treatment services for youth that require additional supports to assist the treatment provider in successfully treating the youth. Additionally, the CRC may make recommendations to refer a case to the Court for approval to place a youth in a less restrictive facility to promote the youth's treatment service plan or to transition the youth back into the community.

Since July 19, 2012 the CRC has met weekly to review referred youth. Youth are referred to the CRC by the residential program provider by providing appropriate notice to the CRC staff. Once a youth's case is reviewed by the CRC the Case Management Specialist assigned to the youth is responsible to implement the recommendations and ensure all required notices and documentation is complete prior to any transfer.

Outcomes

The implementation of SB 245 and the CRC has resulted in a stronger continuum of care that can meet the diverse treatment needs of the youth in Maryland's juvenile justice system. Most notably, the CRC has permitted DJS to create a system of care that contemplates arranging all of the placements available into a continuum based on their treatment delivery and their security level. At the shallow end of the continuum are the placements for youth requiring the lowest level of security and the least restrictive environments. At the high end are the most secure facilities.

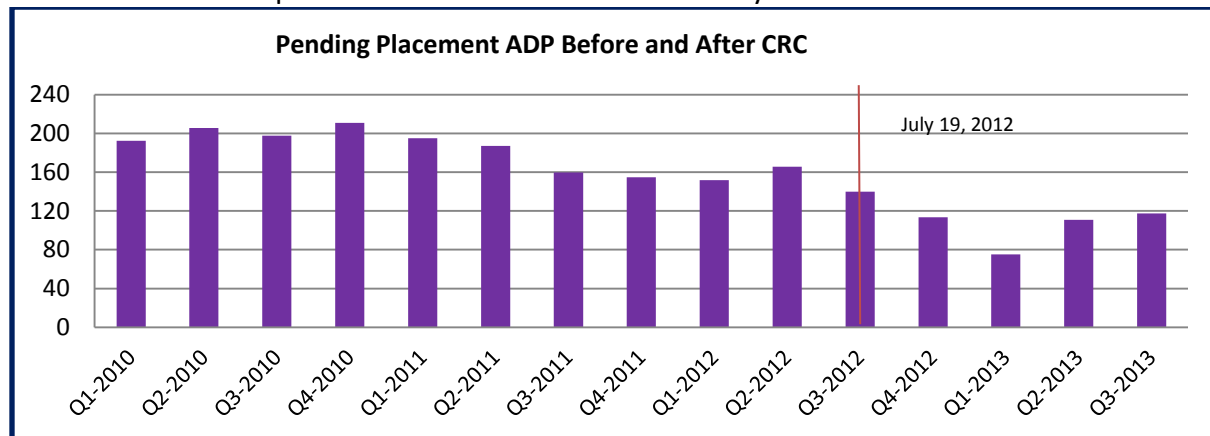
In the system of care model, rather than ejecting the youth, DJS is able move the youth directly to another placement that meets their treatment needs. Youth are best served if changes in placements can be accomplished swiftly to ensure a continuation of treatment services. The model also assists in stepping down youth from higher to lower security placements as they progress in their treatment, allowing DJS to provide transitional services as the youth steps down in placement to help ensure that the youth is successful when returned to the community.

Additionally, the CRC has assisted in managing the youth in secure detention awaiting placement in a committed treatment program. Prior to the passage of SB 245, youth who were detained pending placement made up close to 50% of the detention population, 35% of which were youth pending placement because they were ejected from a committed program. Youth who are pending placement in detention after a failed placement are more difficult to place in subsequent programs and their overall length of stay in the system is much longer.

Between July 19, 2012 and August 31, 2013 the CRC has received 451 referrals. The CRC has a positive impact on many outcome measures DJS tracks. While CRC has been operational the number of youth pending placement has decreased; the average length of stay (ALOS) a youth remains in pending placement in detention has decreased; and the number of youth being placed in a treatment program in less than 30 days has increased.

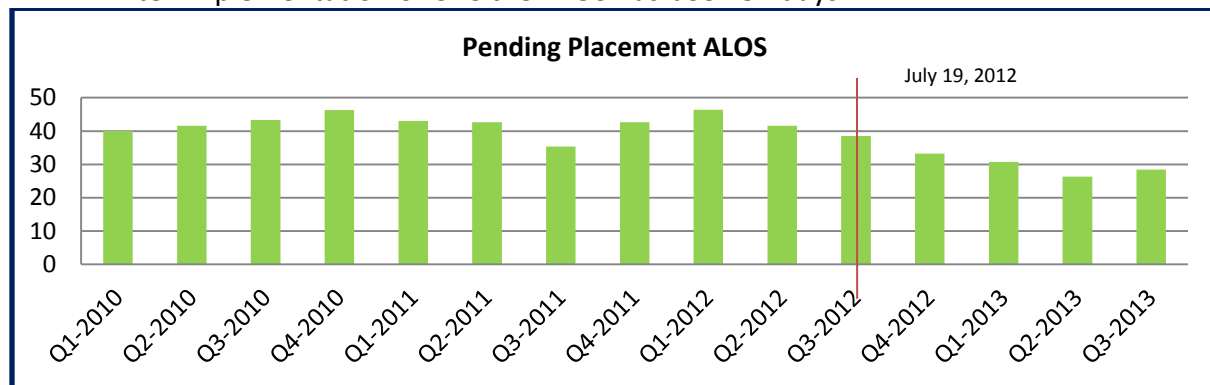
40.7% Reduction in Pending Placement

- Prior to CRC implementation the pending placement ADP was 182 youth.
- Since CRC implementation the ADP has been 108 youth.



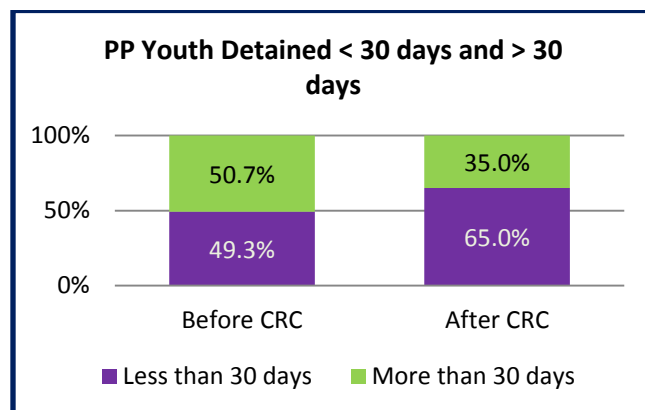
26.2 % reduced ALOS

- Prior to CRC implementation, youth requiring pending placement detention stayed in detention on average 42 days.
- After implementation of CRC the ALOS has been 31 days.



65% of youth are placed within 30 days

- Before CRC was implemented 50.7% of youth waited more than 30 days for their committed placement.
- Since CRC implementation, only 35% of youth are detained for more than 30 days pending placement



Conclusion

The passage of SB 245 and the creation of the Central Review Committee is an integral initiative that supports DJS system-wide reform efforts. This initiative has supported youth receiving the treatment they require without unnecessary disruptions in the provision of services. The ability of DJS to swiftly move youth to the treatment program that best meets their needs results in much needed flexibility to address evolving and diverse treatment needs.

In order to continue moving DJS in a positive direction, it is imperative that the changes in law enacted by the passage of SB 245 remain. DJS is continually evaluating the data and outcomes generated by the Central Review Committee and working with stakeholders to refine the process to strengthen our array of services, meet the needs of our youth, and to promote public safety.